

463 non-ethnic (Amhara), supplier may have done a slovenly job
563 to pick up some quick money, even if he knew the craft.

Moreover, the Amhara is convinced that the craft of the ethnic workman, especially the Falasha, is connected with black magic ("buda"), and therefore strong, though evil; while another Amhara individual who may have persuaded or hired a Falasha to teach him his craft (which occasionally has happened in very recent years), will never be taught the magical power connected with ironsmithing, not even from his own father-in-law if he intermarries into a Falasha family (which is also beginning to happen, in towns). Therefore, the product will not be "strong": if a pot it will break; if a plowpoint it will dull soon.

463 Thus, the ethnic craftsmen retain their patrons, a
563 relationship reinforced also by the personal factor: for
466 the Amhara customer who has established or inherited the habit of trading with a particular Falasha hamlet, where confidence has developed and even personal idiosyncrasies are known, prefers to continue to deal on this personal (or family) basis. This is particularly true since in rural areas the work done is paid for in produce, or in lieu of rent payable by the Falashas for land farmed by them and belonging to the Amhara landholding family. The limitations of this economic, or at best inter-personal relationship are mutually recognized, for neither group would mix socially or intermarry, in the rural district. The boundary line is one of religion as well as occupation and social status. As in most parts of the Middle East, the blacksmith remains an outsider. This is also true of the tanner, in Amhara society.

286 weaver's occupation. If the weaver were to become a Copt
554 and live among Copts, he would be on a social level equal
to a poor, laboring Amhara.

C. Semi-specialized and unskilled.

463 The present division of labor is still based on
563 the former feudal structure of the Amhara economy and
human organization. Specialized skills are left to other
ethnic groups, and, apart from non-ignoble occupations
such as war, church, agriculture, healing, the Amhara
reserve to themselves semi-specialized occupations and
part-time labor traditionally carried out by household
retainers.

The latter type of labor, dealt with in this section, can be roughly divided into three categories:

(1) labor arising out of the feudal lord-peasant relationship; (2) semi-specialization "that anyone can learn", in the attitude of the Coptic Amhara; (3) temporary labor,

[465] for which specified wages based on Time and Energy are agreed upon, called "damoz" (a contraction of "dama-was", lit. "blood-and sweat" compensation). This term is even used for temporary marriage, during which the woman acts as cook and travelling companion.

• 466 The first category arises out of the obligations
[566] owed by the sharecropping "gabbar" to his feudal lord or landowning church: the former statute labor, when everyone would come with his own tools and construct a

466 house, a church, a simple bridge, help in harvest, make charcoal and gather incense for the church, conduct pack animals on military expeditions, function as guard or sacristan, Amhara labor thus includes the agricultural worker of many semi-skills, who usually hires on in March when the little rains launch the plowing season, and who must furnish a "wās", a personal guarantor who will be responsible for the employee's conduct, and agree on time, energy to be expended and wages to be received.

[465] At present the wage is about Eth\$30.- per month for full-time labor, 6 days a week, sunrise to sunset (12 hours, less about 3-5 hours rest); plus free food (usually simple) and a place to sleep inside a hut or temporary shelter; clothing is at the employee's expense. Important church holidays are observed, and leave is usually granted to take care of personal affairs, in the case of an Amhara-Coptic employee. The master may not beat or haze the employee, on penalty of a fine levied by the "cheqa shum".

464 Thus, even the poor Amhara laborer retains his pride, but causes the employer to look for labor among socially lower ethnic groups or even Shanqalla ex-slaves who have remained, largely in Amhara territory after liberation. The employer pays these less, works them more, even on church holidays since many of them are still non-Christian. In proud Begemdir (Gondar) province, where no Galla or Gurage ethnics are available for labor (as they are in Shoa), unskilled labor is a

~~464~~ real problem, and for modern tasks has to be brought from southern provinces, or Eritrea (as the Italians, as well as Joint IV have found out).

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701 The pattern in the former feudal military service was one of greater pride and prestige even for the poorest Amhara. The feudal military chief had to clothe, house and feed his men, and could never use them for hard labor, such as agriculture--especially plowing--even when he had no temporary work for them. They were quartered with peasants whom they exploited like serfs, and since the chief paid no wages, he assigned his soldiers "gult" land, often on a temporary basis, which included the peasants who usually were non-Copts and did not have the protection of either church or cheqa shum.

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797 Though actual slavery has now been abolished, its recent existence still affects the pattern of unskilled and semi-skilled labor, and introduces an important element which differs from the otherwise similar picture of early post-feudal Europe. Most of the slaves were Shangalla (negroid) or Barya (Nilotic); plus some Galla and other south Ethiopian, more-African groups. Since they could not be sold if baptized Christian, the master was not interested in their conversion; the church despised these different lowlanders as unfit to be "raised to Christianity", in the Amhara phrase. If a master desired to free a loyal slave, the method was to have him baptized, on which occasion he would acquire a Christian godfather who would henceforth protect him from sale and insist that he be declared and remain free. Until

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464 and be willing to forego his usual demands, temporarily.

During the caravan season, some will hire on as mule-drivers for a round trip. Otherwise the day laborer is rare among rural Amhara, and met more often only in provincial capitals and the few cities.

D. Labor and the market-town.

464 Laborers hiring on in the towns for temporary work (e.g. in construction) do so usually through a labor broker. There are no organized factories in the provincial towns, only a few small ones in the main cities, and [467] there is not yet such a modern development as a labor union.

Child and female labor is widespread and almost entirely [465] unskilled. A laborer's daily wage was equated with 25¢ Ethiopian, by clause 6 of the Penal Code of 1930, but the present rate actively paid for urban labor of Amhara is Eth. 1.-per day. The Emperor's factory proclamation of 1944 authorized the Ministry of Commerce to regulate hours and conditions of labor, but this actually anticipates future conditions and finds little application at present.

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● 466 The household servant in the town usually hires out on a monthly basis. The traditional, personal guarantor and 2 witnesses of wage agreement are still necessary. The salary may now be as high as Eth. 40.-. The servant is also fed and housed, and if he stays some months may keep any clothing given him. Moreover, his

357 his task is fixed in advance and if an Amhara he will
466 usually refuse to carry out any work for which he was
[E62] not engaged. Women servants usually receive half the
salary of a male servant. Thus only officials and rela-
tively high-income urbanites can afford Amhara servants;
servants of socially lower groups can be hired for con-
siderably less, if the master is willing to forego the
prestige of having Amhara servants.

The urban householder, who is not surrounded by
kinfolk in his residence, usually must hire a night
watchman, "zebanya", who sleeps huddled in coarse sham-
mas in front of the house or behind the outer gate. They
receive the wage of day laborers. Often they are old
veterans of former feudal soldiery, too decrepit for
any other work, yet still fierce-looking and fierce-
tongued enough to discourage thieves.

265 Urban teahouses, coffeehouses and mead-houses
466 employ waiters, "asalafi", who do not have the speciali-
zation of the more prestigious "agafari", but who have
steadier jobs. Their pay is not above that of the day
laborer, but they can accumulate cash more readily.

[463] During the present generation a new element of
875 modern-educated clerks, teachers, hospital "dressers" and
871 government officials is gradually entering the occupa-
tional pattern of the town, though still in very small
percentages. A graduate of the traditional church school
of the rural areas is considered to have only the equi-
valent of 2 grades of elementary school. All towns
now have at least one modern elementary school with 8

576 therefore, know). Abusing people with vulgar insults ("laddafa")
195 tends to reflect on the abuser, so that he is considered "belgena", a
rude person. Such a person speaks in high-pitched, strident style, to
commoners; while to social superiors he fawns and wheedles, using baby-
talk such as "abbabba" (daddy) to a lord and "ammama" or "tatay"
(mummy) to a lady, in mournful tones of self-abasement and utter help-
lessness, begging paternal protection and forgiveness as if he were an
infant that had not yet reached the "age of reason".

576 This is mocked, for the Amhara distinguishes between such
servility and non-cervile gestures of subordination, such as the "gursha",
the bowing from the hip, and the walking backwards when departing from
the king. Servants and other employees may indicate dissatisfaction at
being short-changed, by bowing not quite so deeply the next time, where-
upon a wise lord or employer will take a cue, increase the wage, and
see it acknowledged by a specially deep bow or knee-kiss. Otherwise,
protest will take the form of "murmuring", a semi-articulate protest
which may lead to open rebellion.

576 Kinship terms are sometimes employed, outside the kin context,
601 to communicate respective positions in a situation of differential
social status. Thus, it is respectful to address a status superior as
"ayya" (lit. "my dear elder"), used to the father or elder brother. The
extension of this term is fairly recent, in line with improved communi-
cation and transportation, but the rustic still uses the more ancient
version, "ayya", (which has the same meaning). Because of this, a wit
who does not want to address a rustic as "ato" (Mister), sometimes
addresses the ignoramus, in mock respect, as "ayya". (This cheats him
out of his "entitles", reminiscent of the use of the address "Doc" by
Southern Whites to Negroes, avoiding "Mister")

576 The speech pattern and etiquette to be expected from women,
195 nearly all of whom are illiterate and have no formal education, is
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423 here there is no Domesday Book to give a clear point of departure and none of the successive unravellings of generations of scholars to help the inquirer. Any attempt at the simplification of the evidence must to some extent be a distortion.

Two preliminary generalizations may help to clarify the picture.

[556] Firstly it is important to remember that in Ethiopia, as in all economically backward countries where industry is negligible, almost all material wealth was the direct produce of the herdsman or the man who worked on the land with his plough and his hoe.

423 Ethiopia shared with the rest of tropical Africa a primitive peasant agriculture; the difference was that there stood upon this basis a large
466 hierarchical structure of government. This meant that the cultivator
651 must, as the Ethiopians themselves express it, 'carry upon his shoulders' all that very large proportion of the population which had withdrawn
241 themselves from work on the land. This included the Emperor; all his officials, central and provincial, great and small; the vast hierarchy of the church and the large armies of soldiers. As a result of the undeveloped economy and communications of Ethiopia, the services of the agriculturalist had for the most part to be used directly by the contribution of part of the crops or cattle from his own land or by the use of his labour upon that of another. While slave labour was widely used for domestic purposes, especially in the houses of the rich, it was not in the north used very extensively in the fields, and the main support of Ethiopian state and society was not the slave but the theoretically free cultivator, the *gabar*. The elaborate systems of land tenure and of tribute with all their provincial variations represent only the different means by which his services and produce were utilized by the government and by other classes. It was not the land but the labour of the *gabars* on the land which provided the support for provincial as well as imperial administration. Hence the importance of the forms of tenure and tribute.

423 The word *gabar* has been used as a term of reproach against Ethiopia. At the end of these chapters on the provinces the reader will be in a
466 better position to judge how far this charge was just, and especially
651 how far it accumulated evil association by the forms it assumed in the conquered south. Here the position of the northern *gabar* must be defined in its simplest terms. In theory and, at its best, in practice, the status was not synonymous with slavery or even with oppression. Literally it means one who pays *gibr* or tribute. 'There is no shame in the word "gabbar"' was the general Ethiopian opinion recorded by an observant British consul.¹ As tribute was in theory based upon land

¹ Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 192.

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not the person, it has been said that high notables and the Emperor himself might, in strict technicality, be called *gabars*, since they might hold land burdened with some *gabar* service. Moreover—again in the theory—*gabars* were not, like the serf, tied to the soil; they could leave their land and seek a new holding elsewhere. 423 466 651

The position can be put in another way. The Ethiopian, like the Englishman, owed dues to the central government or to its representative; firstly, he owed the Emperor tribute and tithe for his land; secondly, he owed the equivalent of local rates, and, thirdly, when he was a tenant, he owed rent. The only difference, it might be said, was that the Ethiopian paid all these dues in grain, honey, firewood, stock, or labour instead of in money. The difference was, however, fundamental. In the absence of central control or uniformity and in situations where the *gabar*, the man who provided all this tribute in kind with his own hands, happened to be in a weak position, the form of payment opened the way to all kinds of extortion.

Mrs. Sandford, who with her husband ran a farm for many years in Galla country near the capital and was therefore in a position to provide very authoritative evidence upon this subject, gives the following account of the *gabars*, presumably those in her district. They owed the governor or soldiers to whom they were allotted both produce and services: these might be one day's labour out of three, eight or ten days; the provision of timber for building the master's house and grass for its thatching; firewood and one fifth of the grain crop in addition to the Emperor's tenth. This, she concludes, might have been reasonable especially if the *gabars* could have dared to use their right of appeal. 'But in fact the abuse proved stronger than the system.' The masters exacted more than their due 'and the system was in practice as extortionate as those of old Roman days. Officer and soldier were equally rapacious, . . .' The *gabar* dared not appeal. Coming from a witness of such experience and of such devotion to Ethiopia, this evidence carries weight.¹ 661 651 423 466

The tithe of grain was owed to the Emperor by every subject unless he were exempted on account of his other services to state or church. This grain was collected on the threshing floors and stored in the governor's official granaries; it was used mainly for the sustenance of the soldiers. Since such a bulky product could hardly be carried far in Ethiopia there was very little market in cereals. Pastoral tribes were expected to pay their tithe in stock. There was also a tribute of produce or labour, or both, which was nearly always taken by the governor or his representative and there were further dues or presents to the sub- 651

¹ Sandford, pp. 48-9.

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who cultivated them being required to hand over a certain proportion of their produce every year.* 565
(429)

A man's "bigness," however, depended more on political authority than possession of land. It was often true in Abyssinia, as in feudal France, that the most powerful lords actually possessed relatively few estates. So long as they were not out of favor, the nobility typically were given appointments as provincial and regional governors in return for their loyalty and services. [637]

The responsibilities of governors at all levels were diffuse. As with the emperor, combined in their persons were administrative, judicial, and ceremonial, as well as military, functions. They were obliged to collect the land tax and tithes of their subjects and transmit the proper amount to the king. They communicated imperial proclamations, announced by beating the *nagārit*, a large drum which symbolized the legitimacy of their authority. They had to judge cases of litigation that originated in their court or were appealed from lower levels. They were expected to keep disturbances caused by bandits in their area down to a reasonable minimum. They had to preside informally on the occasion of religious festivals and to provide large feasts for their followers, and occasionally for the beggars and indigents of the area. 565
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The fact that political position was granted as a reward for military activity, like so many acres of land—or to the highest bidder, as Almeida complained²⁹—suggests that the benefits of office outweighed its obligations. Indeed, public authority in Ethiopia was frankly regarded as a private possession by all concerned. The incumbent might change, but the office remained—not so much a set of obligations to fulfill in behalf of the king, or the state, let alone in behalf of the subjects—but a set of opportunities for personal aggrandizement. 565
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[829]

The opportunities, both psychic and economic, were impressive. One was expected to avail himself of all the obsequious gestures which serve to swell the ego of an Abyssinian ruler. If so inclined, the governor could indulge his sadism ad libitum; sword, lash, and rope were, besides the *nagārit* and seal, the official insignia of a provincial ruler. He could order the peasants in his area to labor for him—to plow his lands or build his houses—as well as command them to military service. He could exact tribute from them without relief, in addition to appropriating for his family and retainers part of the [466]
[701]
[651]

* Each land unit worked by a given tenant farmer, or *gabbār*, would be divided according to that proportion, in order to equalize the differences resulting from variation in such factors as the size of land units or the quality of soil. The proportion paid to the landlord varied with the location of the land; thus, one-half might be exacted for ordinary *dēgā* (high) land, while in certain *qolā* (low) areas only a tenth might be required, owing to the difficulties of heat, jungle, and wild beasts.

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571 respects. They are not anchored in a *conscience collective*. They are islands
829 of clarity in a sea of confusion that becomes evident in remarks like the following:

While we were in high school here, we still followed the old beliefs. We went abroad and lost them all. Nothing has yet replaced them. We have no beliefs—in any sphere—religion, social, politics.

• • • •

• We are all of us confused today. Perhaps it is that the change has come too fast. At any rate, we have lost our values. We don't know what is best for us to do.

• • • •

I don't believe there is anyone in the entire country who knows where we are heading or where we should be heading.

This confusion is the confusion of all Ethiopia today, but because the returnees became so deeply involved in Western culture while abroad they alone have experienced it so acutely. Were they engaged in satisfying work and enmeshed in family obligations, moreover, such malaise would be reduced. Precisely in these fundamental areas, however, the returnees are typically frustrated.

571 The burden of the returnees' frustration in work has not been to locate
464 employment, but to find meaningful employment. It is true that several of the foreign-educated have had to wait for months, in some cases for over a year, after returning to Ethiopia before they were actually given employment. With the establishment of a placement board for returned students in the Ministry of Education about 1955, this difficulty has been minimized. The more fundamental problem has been that the institutional system has been insufficiently modernized to make proper use of individuals who had acquired specialized training abroad. There has been great variability of experience in this regard. Many of the technical intelligentsia have found suitable positions, especially those in the fields of medicine and engineering, and have led quite productive and satisfying work lives since shortly after their return. Many others, however, have been demoralized by the experience of having to occupy simple administrative positions which anyone with a little common sense could handle, or by being saddled with purely administrative responsibilities even when initially placed in a technical job. In such circumstances they have found themselves forgetting most of what they learned while abroad and felt themselves not being used.

571 Even when located in work broadly commensurate with their training
• 466 received abroad, the returnees have been frustrated by numerous hardships in the work situation and by the difficulties of reform. As might be expected, work facilities are generally inferior to those which the returnees became

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familiar with in more industrialized societies. Nor is there any disposition to improvise improvements with what facilities are available. Little attention is paid to the condition of offices, for example, which are normally located in dark, drab, depressing rooms. Furthermore, the operating procedures of Ethiopian administration are bound to frustrate those who have been conditioned to more rationalized systems of organization. Departments frequently operate with *ex post facto* budgets. Filing systems are hopelessly archaic. There is virtually no public consciousness of the importance of work time. 571 466 [47]

Ethiopian persons are not geared to a timetable. I have to keep telling myself: "This is how we do it here." Seeing a ten-story building go up in a month, grass and all—that is not for here. . . . I get most annoyed when I cannot finish some matter as promised. Not wanting to reveal the name of my colleague or superior who is holding up the action, I have to make up excuses. Eventually I run out of excuses and this bothers me. . . . Sometimes I get angry and say: "I have given my word to someone, and must have the matter ready today; please sign it." And am told: "Oh, well, don't rush things so." 571 466 805

Work relationships have frequently exasperated the returnees. There has been little inclination to give technically competent employees proper jurisdiction over the personnel in their departments. Technically uneducated superiors have tended to make unrealistic demands—for example, requesting an immediate report on a complicated question that requires weeks to prepare. On the other hand, they have tended to assume that their age and experience are equivalent to the technical knowledge of the foreign-trained, so that technically warranted projects have been casually dismissed because they do not strike the fancy of the superior. 571 466

The returnees have not been so despondent about these conditions which, after all, could be changed—than they are about the apparent futility of trying to change them. Older employees are quick to resent alterations in the accustomed order. 571 466 178 829

My efforts to reform are opposed by most of the men who run the [postal] system now. Some of them have been working there for forty years or so, and they want to keep things just the way they were when mail came in on camels, because they have always done it that way.

Such resistance to change at the workaday level is tacitly supported by those in the upper echelons of authority—the new nobility. In them the returnees have found their main antagonists and from them have received their most painful lacerations. 565

The *shamäggelotch*, or "elders," as they are termed by the intelligentsia, have by no means presented a solidary front in opposition to the young modernizers. On the contrary, the attitude of the new nobility toward the 571 565 178 829

Political and Military Organization (prior to 1942)

- *121 571 The Amhara political system was based, as has been suggested, on an interlocking hierarchy of patron-client relationships. Given the tremendous importance of domination and deference in such relationships, the demands made upon an inferior by his superior seem virtually unlimited. Nevertheless, [642] the system as a whole was characterized by a high degree of decentralization and laissez faire, and there were safeguards for protecting the rights of individuals at all levels.
- *121 651 641 The basic dimension of constraint concerned the imposition of taxes of various sorts. The original meaning of the verb "to rule" in Amharic (*nag-gasa*) is "to collect tribute"; and this was the primary activity of rulers at all levels. As we have seen, provincial rulers had to deliver an annual tribute to their overlords and the latter a tribute to the monarch; local rulers, in turn, obtained income from the labors of peasants and artisans, exacting both land taxes and tithes. Peasants working land which had been granted to a noble or church as *gult* were obliged to hand over the full produce of half their land to the landlords. In addition to paying these periodically collected taxes, the peasants were liable to have their stores confiscated when required to billet soldiers or subjected to raids by passing armies.
- [466] The peasants were further required to furnish a certain amount of corvée labor each month to their rulers and landlords. This might be used for purely personal projects, like cultivating the lord's estates, or for quasi-public ones, such as constructing a new church building. There was, finally, the obligation *121 641 701 689 626 for every adult male who was not a member of the clergy to take up arms under his local lord whenever a levy was proclaimed. Those who did not respond to such a call were subject to fines or other punishment as well as the barbs of public opinion.
- *121 701 702 714 The military organization of the Amhara was highly individualistic. Unlike the Galla, the Amhara did not provide for the collective training of their warriors. Each man was left to learn how to fight by himself and to provide [702] his own equipment. A man could become a "career" soldier when he came [714] of age simply by purchasing a shield; or he might prevail upon an established lord to arm him temporarily, with the promise of returning the equipment should he leave that lord's service. Similarly, there were no collective provisions for the supply of troops. Each man was left to fend for [705] himself, drawing upon the supply of grain he brought along and whatever booty he could acquire on the warpath; the preparation of his food was left to the wife or servant who accompanied him to battle.
- *121 701 726 The conduct of a military operation exhibited a minimum of external constraint and discipline. Chains of command existed with respect to the general direction of troop movements, and the camping pattern was highly